



Weekend roadtest: Peugeot 308 SW Tech Edition 130 auto

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Anyone who doubts the future of estate cars should take a long look at the Peugeot 308 SW series and see what it offers for the family who want space without the bulk of an SUV, writes Robin Roberts.



The 308 series of hatchbacks and estates has been a backbone of the range for decades with different prefixes but it's as relevant today as it ever was.

What's more it has kept pace with taste and demand so it's a very good offering in what is a comparatively small segment, which some believe will outlive the SUVs so popular today.

There are over 20 models in 5dr hatch or Station Wagon estate bodystyles, priced from approximately £20,000 to £30,000 in six trim levels and powered by a wide selection of petrol and diesel engines developing 110 to 260ps, with or without automatic transmission.

Our SW version is towards the top of the series at just under £25,600 and gets the surprising 1.2 triple-pot engine matched with an eight-speed automatic/manual



gearbox. It's a very impressive powertrain which makes you wonder why anyone would want a manual box.



Despite its comparatively lack of capacity, the 1.2 litre engine goes a very good job when there's just the driver aboard, but you have to work it a bit harder when loaded.

This is reflected in the fuel economy with it easily heading towards 50mpg on light throttle and then falling back to sub 40mpg with people or a full loadbed. We averaged a good 42mpg overall but much of the time it was showing slightly better on main roads.

What the figures alone don't indicate is how smooth and refined was the engine and gearchanges. The noise level was very low even when it was stretched into the higher rev range and then it was busy yet pleasant note, while the gearbox was silent, the changes quick and silky and there was little advantage in manually moving through them.

The sophistication continued with the very well balanced steering, good turning circle and feedback, and brakes underfoot with dragged down speed without drama or fuss. The electric parking brake also did a first class job on our usual test slope.



I liked the way the fascia and other controls were grouped around the driver and field of view, with nearly everything in direct line of sight, close to hand and well marked. The instruments were straightforward,



big and clear with a centre multifunction display for essentials operated off a stalk or the wheel spokes.

The central info-tainment display was well sized and very clear to read whatever you wished to use from the range of climate control, media, navigation or mobile phone, but some think too much is put into this and it can be distracting if you need to make use of it on the move.

The car's climate controls worked well through this touch-screen and the system quickly adjusted to changes, with excellent directional control and output into the large cabin and with modest noise level.

It also had a full length glass roof which contributed to a very airy interior feel, four



powered windows and excellent visibility with a low waistline, big wipers and bright lights at night.

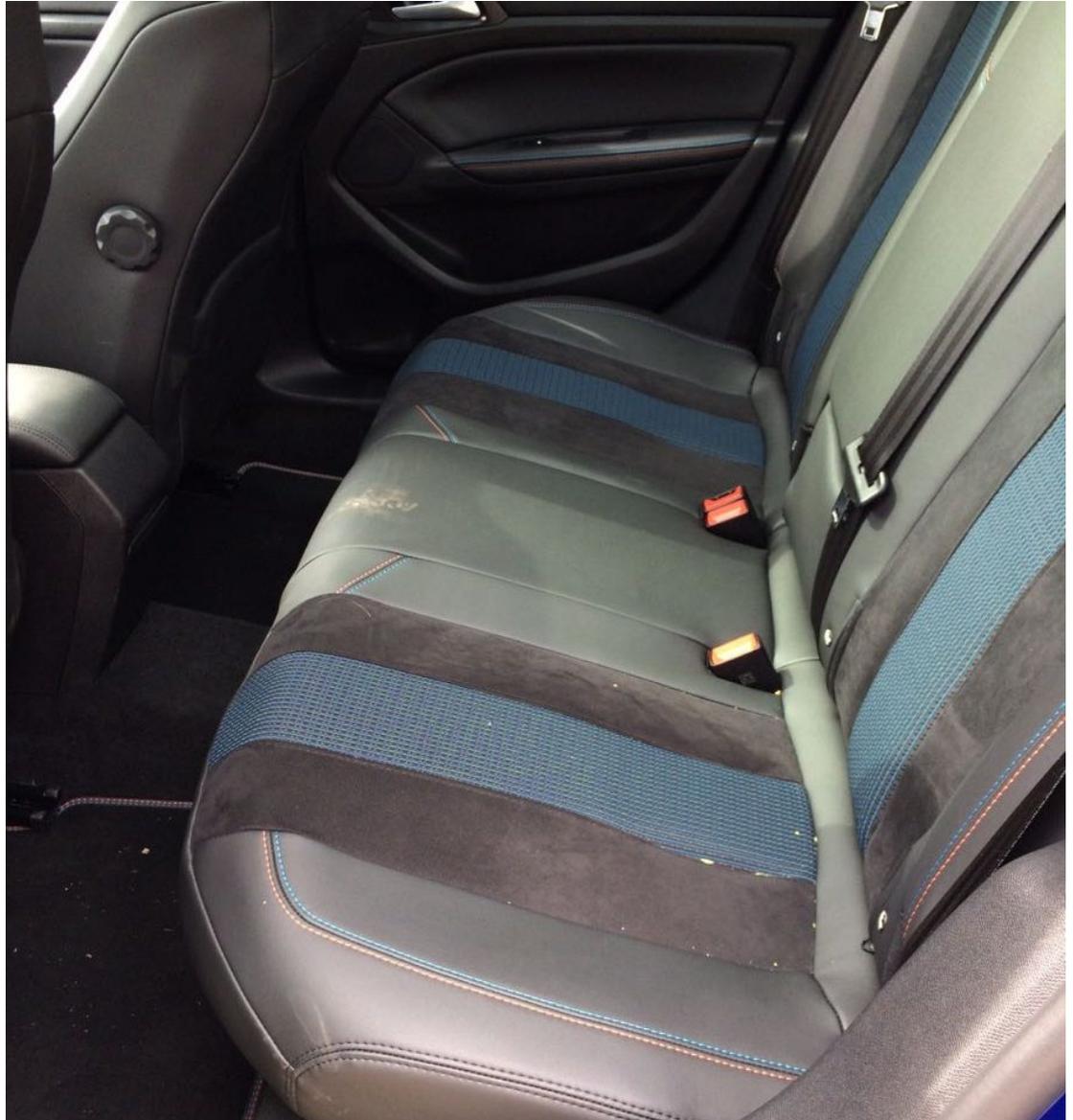
Access was excellent, whether to cabin or loading area, with a knee-high flat floor, quickly folded offset split backseat and a good minimum capacity



which could be almost tripled in seconds.



The seats' shape supported and located everyone very well with good adjustment on the front pair and plenty of room throughout.



The 308SW ride quality was worthy of a much larger car, soaking up all manner of road shocks and smoothing out the worst bumps at any speed. It's softness meant it rolled around tighter turns however.

While this could feel unsettling it actually gripped the road very well and the 308SW had forgiving handling and a safe responsive nature.



With hardly any noise coming inside, the car insulated and cosseted occupants and was particularly good at covering long distance without complaint and very economically.

The car's ability to manoeuvre easily and quickly made it ideal in an urban setting, while its composure was welcome on country roads between.

It offers nearly all the room of many SUVs but delivers that in a good package with excellent equipment and features, a willing economical engine and good economy.



Unless you need carrying capacity for taller items, there is little to put you off this nimble do-it-all with its cachet of rarity.

FAST FACTS

Peugeot 308 SW Tech Edition 130 auto s/s

Price: £25,575

Mechanical: 131ps 3cyl 12v 1.2turbo-petrol, 8sp auto



Max Speed: 127mph

0-62mph: 10.2sec

Combined MPG: 42mpg on test

Insurance Group: 20

C02 emissions: 124g/km

Bik rating: 28%, tax band H, £170FY, £145SR

Warranty: 3yrs/ unlimited miles

Sizes: L4.59m, W1.57m, H1.48m

Bootspace: 660 to 1775 litres

Kerb: 1204kg

For: Extremely smooth, comfortable, roomy with good driving position, agile, responsive and good economy.

Against: Modest oddments space, body roll, average performance.

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